

**ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**

**QUESTION 60-18(3):  
AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES AFTER ADDICTIONS TREATMENT**

**February 8, 2018**

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you can see that we are tag-teaming together on the topic of the addictions centres. As I mentioned in my statement, there are steps that I feel the Minister could investigate to help recovering addicts with their long-term recovery beyond the initial addictions-recovery stage.

The first and most important, in my mind, based on the tour that we did is that people coming out of addiction treatment centres should not be discharged into housing. The Minister, I know, heard this point as well during our tour, so what is his take on the importance of housing to people returning home after finishing treatment? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I did attend the tour, and I did hear exactly what the Member heard, and I agree with what the Member is saying. There is no question that we want a stable environment for our individuals to go to when they are returning. I will say that some people are returning to their homes, which may provide the environment they need, but we heard loud and clear that there are some individuals who are returning to couches, and that is deeply troubling.

We are working on a new addictions recovery action plan, and I am really looking forward to hearing the report from the Members on the tour and the recommendations they have because I would like to incorporate that into the addictions recovery plan to address the exact type of issue that the Member is speaking of. I look forward to getting their report. I look forward to working with them to address exactly this type of situation.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you to the Minister for that response. I feel it is safe to say that this will be one of the recommendations of our report. I am wondering if the Minister can be proactive and commit to investigating this idea and presenting back an idea of the costs and benefits of ensuring that all of the people who are coming out of addictions treatment centres are discharged into appropriate housing?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to create the additional work of having two parallel activities happening at the same time. We were working on the addictions recovery action plan. I hear the Member loud and clear. I hear the Members loud and clear. I feel the same way, and this is part of the work that we are intending to do in the addictions recovery action plan. So, rather than duplicating our efforts, I would prefer to keep us on track to that particular plan and include the work that the Members are suggesting.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you for that response. The treatment facilities that we visited provided a range of after-care. Some of it was on the phone. Some of it was online. Some of it was an invitation to return for sort of additional treatment.

Can the Minister commit to investigating what kind of options may be available from the treatment centres to support people in recovery in the small communities?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** It was clear that after-care is one of the areas that is a challenge for our residents who have gone out for treatment. Whether it is an on-the-land program, whether it is a community-based program, it is the after-care that we need to make sure they are getting.

Not only did the facilities mention the programs that they are providing as far as after-care, which I am open and willing to and will be directing the department to include in our discussion around the addictions recovery plan, but there was also the suggestion that peer support needed some additional support. There is peer support throughout the Northwest Territories. It is supported by Alberta organizations like AA and others, but what I have already directed the department to do is to start exploring how we as a government could support or enhance or provide some incentives to these peer support groups so that they can be sustainable over the long-term because one of the things we heard is some of those peer support groups do not exist, and they are necessary. So, in addition to what the Member has said, I have also given the direction to move forward and figure out what we could do around peer support groups. I think there are some great models out there. The Yukon is doing some really creative things about providing additional supports to their peer support groups, and we are exploring that, as well.

Moving forward with the addictions recovery action plan, we want to make sure the best use of new models, new evidence, what we have heard from Members, what we have heard from communities, build upon previous action plans, and try to improve the results for our residents throughout the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's answer. He is obviously taking a very proactive approach with this. Since our tour, I have learned about pharmaceutical supports that support sobriety and a harm-reduction model. There is a drug called Vivitrol which is administered monthly, and it dampens cravings. It assists people in staying sober. Could the Minister also commit to investigating the costs and benefits of offering this drug to people in recovery? Mahsi.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Speaker, the Member did share with me a very informative video on the different options around harm control, including this particular drug. I did share that with the department and asked them to include it in their information to help them have an informed, current, modern addictions recovery action plan. I anticipate that that work will be done. I will confirm that it is part of the plan moving forward. It does not mean that we are committing to providing that drug because I think there are some issues with whether or not it is actually available in Canada or not, that we need to really make sure that we are really comfortable with. The video also talked an awful lot about the science behind healing. It is not just a 12-step program and relying on an abstinence-based 12-step program but also addictions management and a science behind helping people deal with addictions. This is another area that I think the Northwest Territories as well as Canada must explore more.

I have raised this at a national level, and I am going to continue to find ways to move forward with that as a concept here, in the Northwest Territories. Harm-control, harm-reduction is a real thing, and it adds value. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.